

Message Text

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R 201415Z MAY 74

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 101915

FOLLOWING TEL SENT ACTION LONDON INFO NEW DELHI, CINCPAC,
CINCUSNAVEUR, USCINCEUR, COMIDEASTFOR, CINCLANT, CINCPACFLT,
FROM SECSTATE WASHDC MAY 16:

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 101915

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, XO, UK, US

SUBJECT: PORT CALLS AT DIEGO GARCIA

REF: NEW DELHI 5379

1. NEW DELHI'S 5379 NOTES THE VISIT TO DIEGO GARCIA BY A
FRENCH NAVY FRIGATE, AND WONDERS ABOUT GENERAL POLICY ON
PORT CALLS AT DIEGO. AMBASSADOR MOYNIHAN SUGGESTS THAT
THERE MAY BE SOME ADVANTAGE IN QUIETLY PASSING WORD TO THE
INDIAN NAVY, AT SOME SUITABLE OPPORTUNITY, THAT WE WOULD
BE PREPARED TO CONSIDER A REQUEST BY THE INDIAN NAVY FOR
A SHIP CALL AT SOME TIME TO BE MUTUALLY ARRANGED. IF THE
OFFER WERE ACCEPTED, IT WOULD IMPLICITLY CONVEY GOI ACCEP-
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TANCE OF THE LEGITIMACY OF THE US PRESENCE ON THE ISLAND;

IF NOT PICKED UP, WE WOULD GET THE BROWNIE POINTS FOR TRYING, AT NO PARTICULAR COST.

2. THERE IS NO CLEARLY ARTICULATED POLICY FOR PORT CALLS AT DIEGO. THERE IS THE PRECEDENT SET INITIALLY, AND REPEATED RECENTLY, BY THE FRENCH. THE PRINCIPAL CONSTRAINTS ARE CURRENT POLITICAL SENSITIVITIES IN THE AREA, AND THE LIMITED FACILITIES ON THE ISLAND. FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES, A SHIP CALL CAN ONLY BE JUST THAT -- A SHIP CALLING AT DIEGO. THE ONLY PEOPLE ON THE ISLAND ARE THOSE ASSOCIATED WITH THE US NAVY COMMUNICATIONS STATION; AND IT MUST BE RECOGNIZED THAT FACILITIES AVAILABLE AT THE STATION, I.E. BILLETING, MESSING, EXCHANGE AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES, ARE EXTREMELY LIMITED. DIEGO GARCIA IS NOT AN INDIAN OCEAN SUBIC BAY.

3. THE POLITICAL SENSITIVITIES ABOUT PORT VISITS TO DIEGO GARCIA ARE SO OBVIOUS AS NOT TO REQUIRE REHEARSAL.

4. NONETHELESS, WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF THE CONSTRAINTS DESCRIBED ABOVE, WE AGREE THAT THERE IS MERIT IN AMBASSADOR MOYNIHAN'S SUGGESTION. WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE HELPFUL FOR THEIR NAVY, SHOULD THEY ACCEPT OUR INVITATION, TO HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO SEE WHAT WE HAVE THERE.

5. THE ADDITIONAL QUESTION, OF COURSE, IS NOT JUST WHETHER INDIAN NAVY SHIP VISITS TO DIEGO WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE, BUT WHAT OUR RESPONSE MIGHT BE TO OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE AREA -- CEYLON, PAKISTAN, IRAN, POSSIBLY AUSTRALIA OR NEW ZEALAND. WHAT SORTS OF COMPLICATIONS WOULD AN INDIAN SHIP VISIT POSE? IN PRINCIPLE, ALTHOUGH EACH REQUEST WOULD HAVE TO BE HANDLED ON ITS OWN MERITS, IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO TURN DOWN A REQUEST FROM PAKISTAN AFTER WE HAD ACCEPTED ONE FROM INDIA.

6. DIEGO GARCIA IS BRITISH, AND ULTIMATELY THE PRINCIPAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR APPROVAL WILL BE THEIRS. WE WOULD BE GRATEFUL IF YOU WOULD RAISE THIS WITH THEM AT A SUITABLY HIGH LEVEL, ASKING NOT FOR AN IMMEDIATE RESPONSE, BUT FOR A THOUGHTFUL APPRAISAL OF WHAT MIGHT BE DONE. WE REALIZE
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THAT HMG IS IN THE MIDDLE OF THEIR DEFENSE REVIEW, WE WOULD PREFER THIS NOT TO GET TANGLED UP IN THAT. UNQUOTE
RUSH

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